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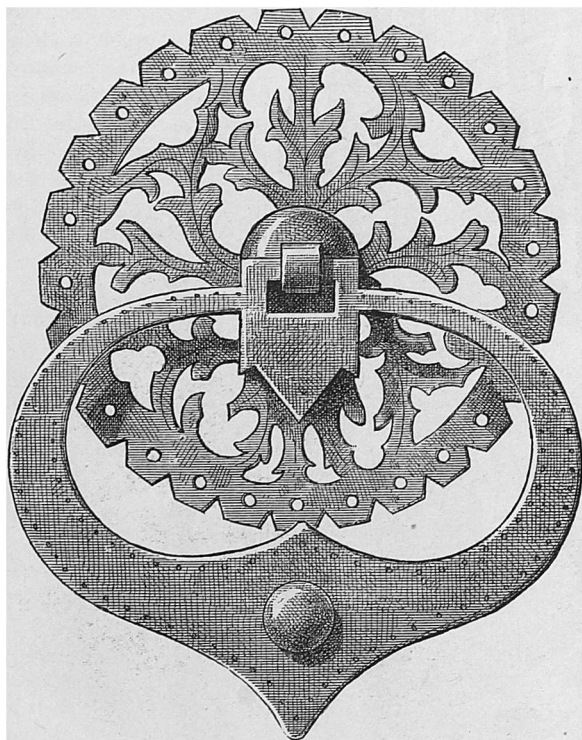
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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

## THE MODERN HOME.

### I.—VESTIBULE, HALL AND STAIRCASE.



BELL-PULL OF WROUGHT IRON.

THAT the art of to-day has a character of its own and that it reflects the manners and the ideas of our times is something that many observers will deny, and, as regards what we call high art, they may be right to a degree, for our beliefs and our highest aspirations we cannot express in paint or marble; but in respect to the art that concerns itself with beautifying the common things of life they are wrong and are a decade behind the age. We have started an entirely new constructive architecture, to which, if it will not blossom into ornament, ornament may at least be applied; we have, in great part, remodelled

our household furniture, and we have proceeded so far in the use of the most complicated and powerful machinery as to discover that it cannot do everything, and that in the case of objects of taste and household use comparatively uneven hand-work is preferable to the best that can be turned out by a machine.

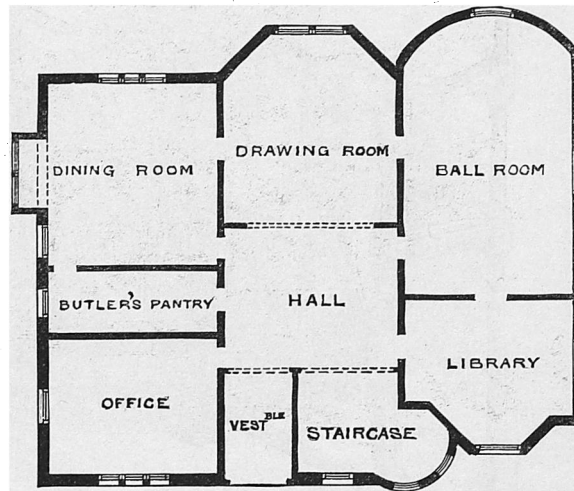
In all such affairs our notions as to the importance of hygiene, as to the desirability of having a little of everything, of leading a life pressed full and running over with occupations and amusements, are considered. A man may have his house and all its belongings fit him as exactly as his coat. Never, indeed, have building and all the arts connected with it followed more precisely not only the common requirements of the time, but also those of individuals, than these arts are now beginning to do. The period of indifference, ignorance, and bad taste in these matters is rapidly passing away, and so much has already been accomplished of a lasting nature that it is pretty certain it will not soon return. These considerations make it an easier task to-day to write about modern homes than it would have been five years or even one year ago. There has been so much progress even in the short space of a twelvemonth that matters are now certain that were not then, and plans can be spoken of as proved and accepted which were scarcely mooted a very short time ago.

By much the most important change that has been effected since the beginning of the present movement (for so it may fairly be styled) is that which has been made in the planning of the first floor of city houses. Formerly in New York the first floor consisted of a narrow hall with a still narrower staircase rising almost from the door and leading the visitor's thoughts at once to those regions of the house with which he was likely to have no business whatever; in addition to this there were the "front and back parlors" and, perhaps, a piazza in the rear. The dining-room was in the basement as well as the kitchen. Such a disposition is admirably adapted

for a boarding-house, and it is satisfactory to be able to add that most of the houses in which it is still to be found are applied to that use or soon will be. In new houses of any pretensions the old hall has disappeared in favor of a vestibule much shorter and twice as wide. In place of the "front parlor" there is a reception-room or office or small drawing-room. The hall in its new form, a large square room which with an ample staircase takes up the full width of the

place of the old "back parlor," and the back piazza has made way for a dining-room and pantry and perhaps a library. Downstairs what used to be the dining-room is now a billiard-room, and the kitchen accommodations are much extended by being carried under both hall and dining-room. For the sake of showing all the principal rooms of a large house on one plan, I have taken a house (Mr. Ross Winans's, of Baltimore) in the building of which space was not economized. Here,

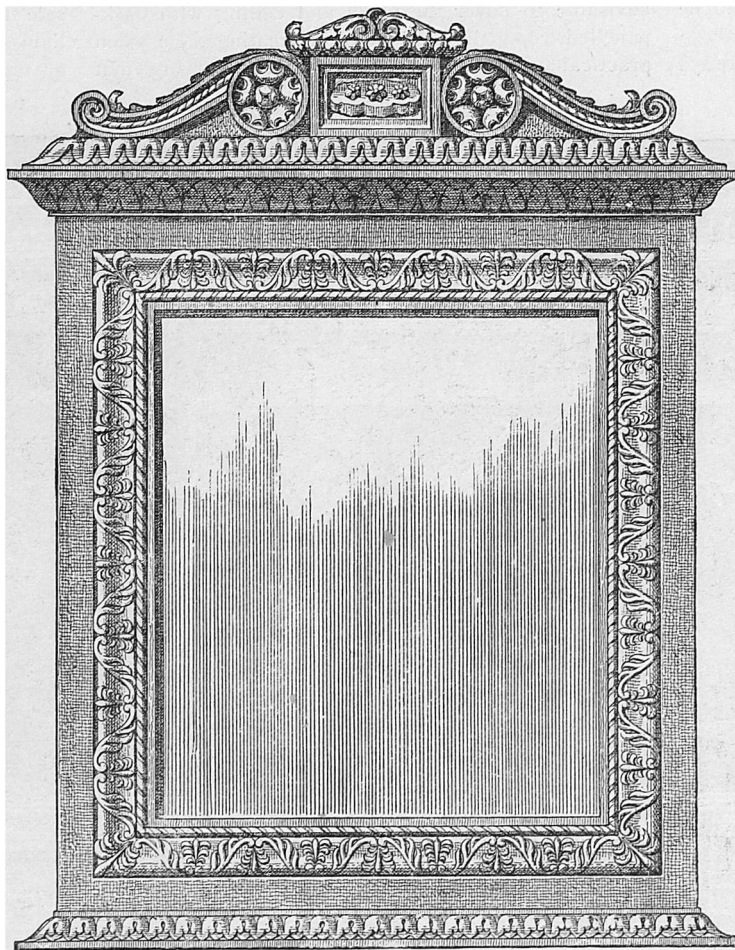
while hall and vestibule, office and dining-room and drawing-room are in nearly their usual positions, a large ball-room and a library have been added. Still even this plan does not include all the rooms that are often to be found on the first floor, for the boudoir is in this case immediately over the ball-room, and there is sometimes a breakfast-room and a smoking-room attached to the dining-room.



GROUND PLAN OF THE HOUSE OF MR. WINANS.

Often again the large central hall is used instead of a drawing-room, or the office is done away with, and a parlor takes its place; or when the dining-room is on the plan, there is a library, and the dining-room takes the place of the drawing-room. The radical and essential change is in making the hall central and large and in lighting it from the roof by means of the staircase-well, whether or not it is also lighted from one side by windows. This gives an opportunity in every house of having at least one handsome and noble room; for its size, its semi-public character, the variety of uses to which it may be put, and, above all, the fine feature of a handsome staircase rising the full height of the house and cut off perhaps by an arcade or a screen of pierced and carved wood, relieve it almost of necessity from the meanness to which our narrow city lots are liable to reduce every other room. For this reason the greater part of the present article will be devoted to the hall and its decoration. But first there must be just a few words about the vestibule.

Though no longer used according to its first intent—for who would trust his coat or his overshoes in an open passage?—the vestibule is necessary in our climate as a substitute for the porch, to afford shelter to any one applying for admission to the house. If the place is large enough to contain it a stone or marble seat will not be unacceptable here; otherwise the vestibule should be unfurnished. It should never, in this democratic country, be undecorated. The walls may be cased with marble or panelled with wood or simply frescoed. The floor had better be of



CARVED MIRROR FOR THE HALL.

ADAPTED FROM A MODEL IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.

mosaic, and the old Roman designs with a "salve" at the threshold are the best for the purpose. The ceiling should not be ignored, even if every other ceiling in the house is. Since it is small, it should not cost much to make it a



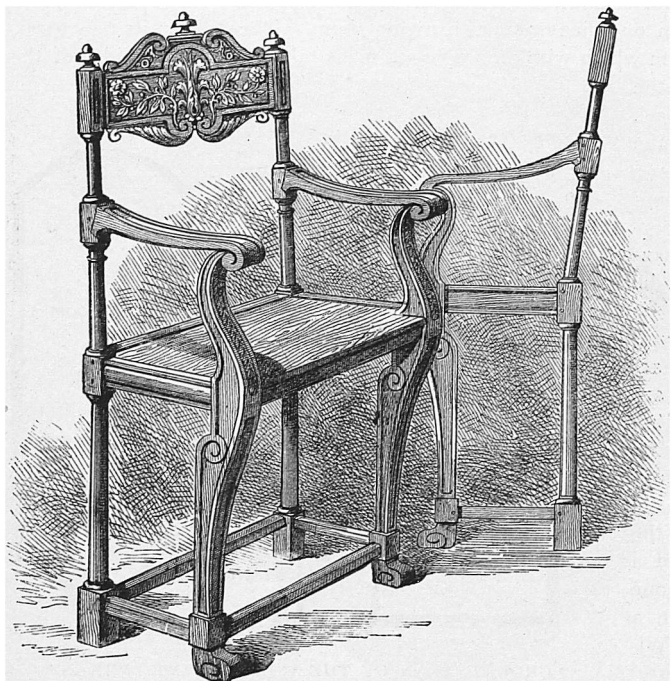
panelled one. If the owner finds his vestibule ceiling plain on taking possession, a good plan is to have a few pine boards sawed into shape and with moulded edges tacked to them so as to form a framework. These may be sustained by a wooden cornice, and may themselves keep in place panels of thin painted wood or of painted leather or canvas on narrow quarter-inch stretchers. The inner doors should by all means have stained-glass lights, but not of heavy

corresponding in width to the old-time hall between the vestibule and the main hall. It should be treated in a style between the two. It may contain a few chairs similar to those shown more for appearance than for use. A mirror that can be placed flat against the wall may be useful here, and a lamp may hang from the open arch between the passage and the central hall. A dado of inlaid marble and a frieze either painted or of colored stucco may also be introduced.

The main hall, though lighted by the vestibule door and the stair-well, is sometimes, in city houses, a rather dark room. It is well, wherever a large window cannot be open-

ed on one side, to have all or most of the doors opening on it from the other rooms both wide and fitted with leaded glass. Even so it will, at times, be found unadvisable to cover the walls and ceiling with dark-panelled wood, the best mode of treating them when practicable. Such panelling and any carving that

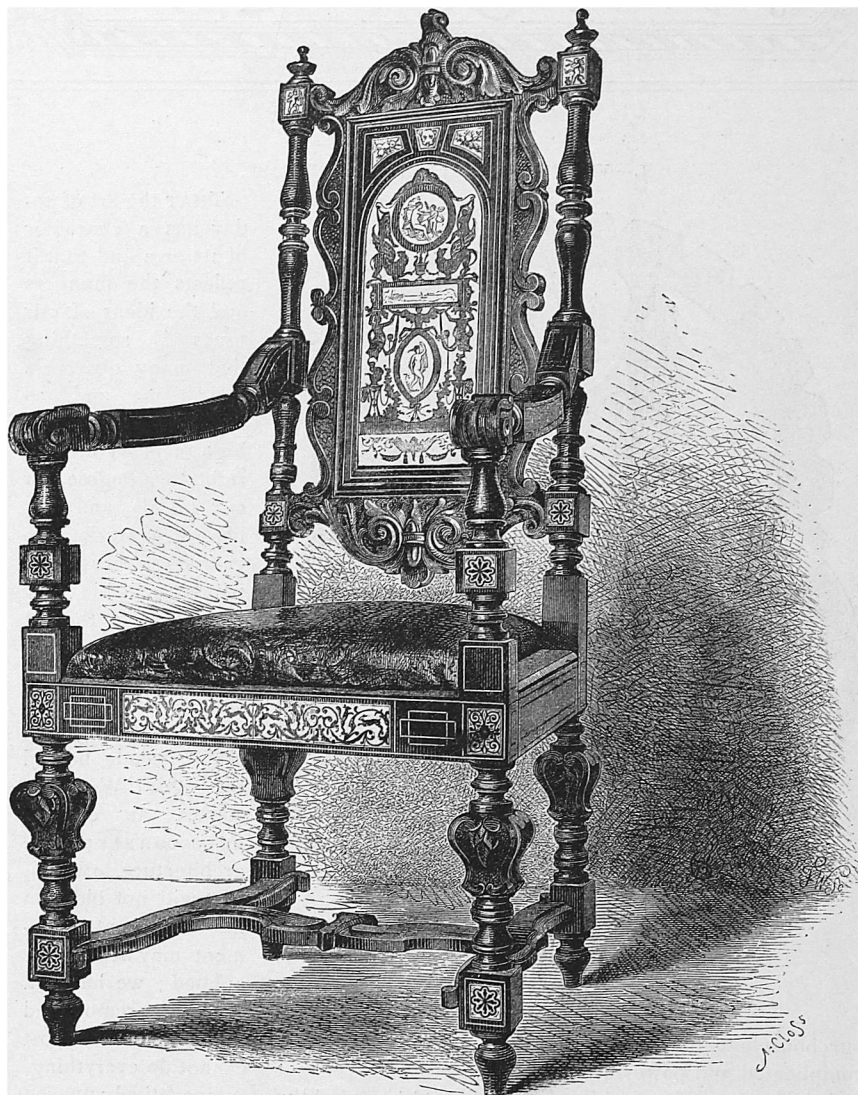
handsome frieze, executed in two tones of the same warm color, with the greater part of the wall above the dado in an intermediate tone, will be a perfectly



OLD ENGLISH HALL CHAIRS.

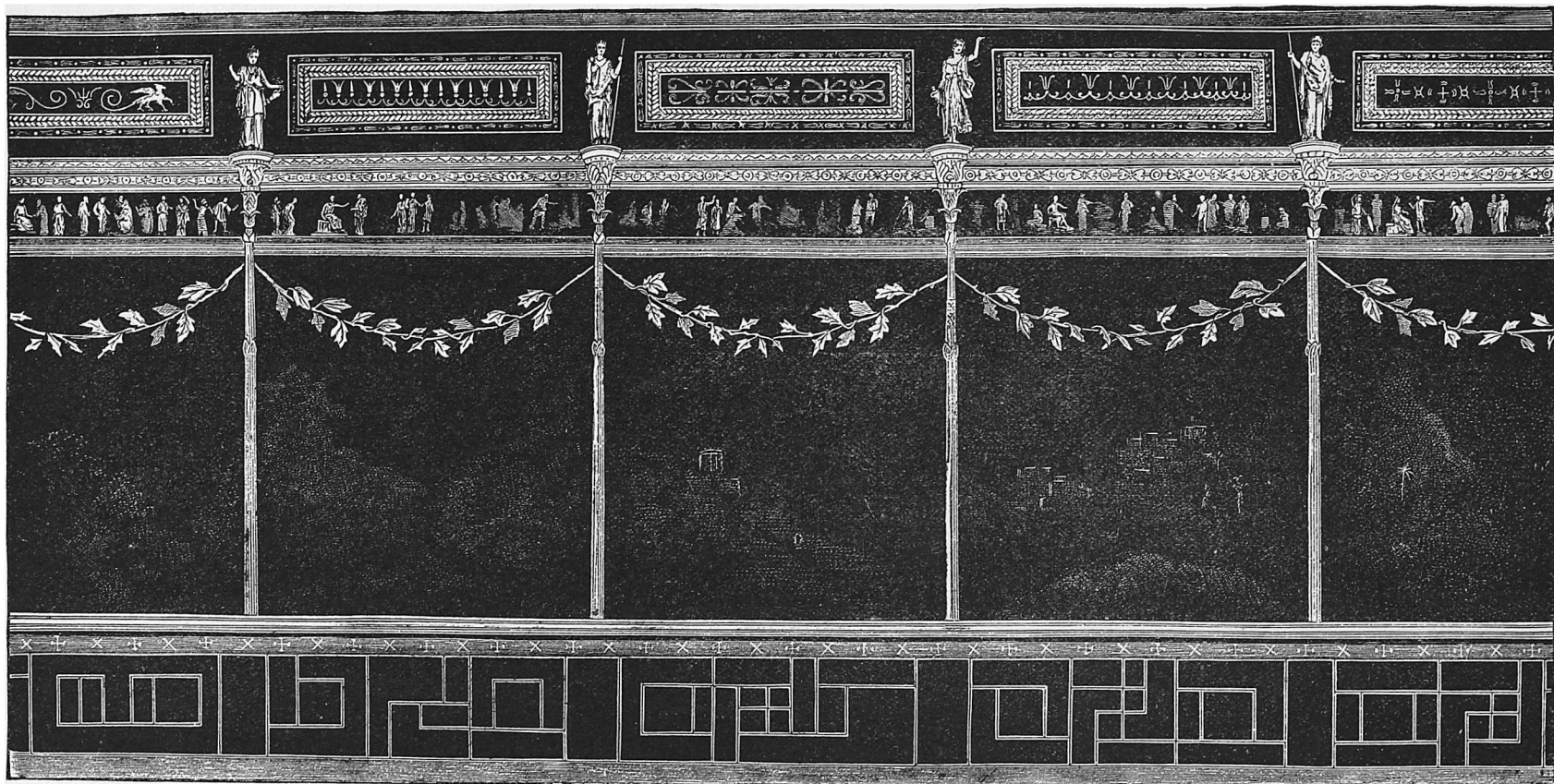
opaque glass such as would darken the interior passage.

Whatever may be done with the rest of the house, it will be best to treat the vestibule in some well-understood style, either classic or Renaissance, or, if Gothic is to prevail throughout, then in some decided and masculine form of Gothic. The bell-pull which we illustrate may give some idea of what should be understood by that. If the house is to be mainly in the Renaissance style, as the vestibule should always



HALL OR LIBRARY CHAIR.—GERMAN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

safe treatment. The colors recommended by William Morris for interior decoration—a russet red, or orange pink, or a pale brownish gold color—are



POMPEIAN WALL DECORATION FOR THE VESTIBULE.

be more severe, a Pompeian motive like that which is shown would answer for the frescoed walls.

If instead of the office there is a drawing-room or parlor looking on the street, there will be a passage

may go with it had better be of a rather staid type, like the better examples of sixteenth century work. Failing this, it will be best to trust to fresco or distemper painting for the decoration of the walls. A

best, and they may be seen in many of the more recently decorated houses in New York.

Even when there is plenty of light this method of treating the walls of the main hall is to be recom-



mended as being very favorable to pictures. It is one of the beauties of this hall that, when not too dark, it is often the best place in the house to display four or five large pictures; and no room, unless a regular picture gallery, should have more. This hall is still semi-public; and who that is worthy to own a fine painting is not glad to show it to as many as possible? Its wall-spaces are the largest obtainable, and if kept free from other ornament will set off a good-sized picture with a liberal margin. Whenever possible a large painting should be framed into the very construction of the room, as if it were a door or a window; and generally when this is not done it is bad both for the room and the picture.\* But if the hall is at all well planned its walls will be found so divided by doors and chimney-breast as to leave just room enough for a considerable painting in each of the interspaces, where when they are hung each can be seen independently of the others, and where the finest perspective will not destroy our sense of the security of the wall itself.

If the hall is not to contain paintings the spaces between openings should be filled by large and handsome articles of furniture. These are also good places for trophies of arms and armor, a large vase or two, a statue of bronze or marble, or, indeed, any work of art of sufficient size and importance. The mantel should be large and handsome.

The ceiling of the central hall is generally kept flat or with rafters, and it is divided from the staircase-well by a beam which carries around the mouldings of the cornice. This beam is supported either by pillars or arches, which, with the balustrades, form a sort of open screen between the room and the stairs. It will be found expensive to have a coffered ceiling on account of its size. Compartments painted, but without any attempt at simulating relief, will generally be found best. The floor should be a parquet, or should, at any rate, have a handsome border of hard woods.

As for the movable furniture of this room, its character should depend on the use that is to be made of it. It is often a substitute for a drawing-room. It is always supposed to be used as an additional drawing-room on great occasions. It is sometimes converted into a music-room. It is at all times a place through which everybody is constantly passing, and where a person may be expected to sit or lounge at any hour of the day. There should, therefore, be a sufficient number of chairs, a table, perhaps a sofa. A book-case can be put here if there is no library (always supposing there is plenty of light), or a cabinet of curiosities, if there is no other place for it. Some of the chairs illustrated are somewhat too stiff for a room that is to be much and variously used; but if the hall

is to be little more than a place of passage they are admirably adapted to it. It should, in any case, be a big and handsome room. A man need have no other such but his dining-room. Economy may reign everywhere else; one may very well do without ornament while he is asleep or while he is talking to a creditor at the front door, and he may, as we have seen, dispense with all apartments of state and reception, the hall taking their place; but there should be nothing

wherein the wall opposite to the landings, which are all on one side, rises sheer to the top of the house, one unbroken surface, extremely hard to manage. If a person could get far enough away from it, it might be imposing; but that is impossible; you stand on the lowest step and look up, up, up, till, no matter how wide the stairs, you seem to be gazing up a chimney-shaft, and your knees ache by anticipation. In one New York house this difficulty is conquered in a

very happy manner. The stair-well is completely vaulted over at the height of the third story, and the pendentives of the two domes into which the ceiling is divided extend far enough down to break the monotony of the lower wall very agreeably, resting as they do on finely modelled corbels. Circular openings framed by egg-and-dart mouldings and filled with pale-tinted glass let through the light. The effect is very satisfactory, and the expedient will, probably, be much copied. ROGER RIORDAN.

#### THE VESTIBULE AND THE RECEPTION-ROOM.

Nine out of ten houses in New York are very poorly off in the matter of hallway. And yet, so far as a hospitable or an inhospitable impression upon the visitor's mind is concerned, it makes all the difference in the world whether the opening house-door admits him to a generous share of his host's square feet of lot, or to a mere pocket-handkerchief of passageway not big enough to swing the legendary cat in, certainly not big enough to swing on one's overcoat in.

It is so generally true, that it can hardly savor of exaggeration to say that all the houses let out to tenants in New York and by far the greater part of those lived in by their owners sacrifice the comfortable looks of a roomy entry to the necessities of the parlor or the reception-room which opens upon it. This is, of course, not because New Yorkers like a roomy entry less, but because they like a roomy parlor more. They would certainly prefer to have both entry and parlor large enough for looks and for comfort, but they, or the men who build their houses for them, have so arranged matters that one of the two must be sacrificed to the other, and very wisely, no doubt, they prefer to sacrifice the entry.

When people with money to do as they will build houses for themselves to live in, they often manage the matter more skilfully, and,

as we shall see when we come to talk of the hall, the problem is often solved with much taste as well as sense. And were it as common nowadays as it will be soon, to have passenger-elevators in private houses—it is common enough in that paradise of housekeepers, Boston—there would be no difficulty at all in the matter; the hall and dining-room with a reception-room, if needed, might be on the first floor and the drawing-room and library on the second, as in so



STAIRCASE LANTERN.

FROM A SIXTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH MODEL IN THE HOTEL DE VOGNÉ, DIJON.

mean about it then—it is the heart of the house, and that of its owner will be judged from it.

I like best the secluded stair, whose carved arcade gives a cloistral appearance and whose sky-light lets fall a cascade of light to the centre of the house. It is very important that it should have an easy grade and broad landings on every floor; these landings are excellent places for prints, photographs, kakemonos, and the like. A difficulty occurs in most town houses

\* Obviously, small paintings, water-colors and prints do not come under this rule